



## Cabinet - Supplementary

### Background Papers for Agenda Item 17: NNDR Discretionary Discount Scheme

**Monday 24 July 2017 at 6.00 pm**

Board Rooms 3, 4 & 5 - Brent Civic Centre

#### Membership:

##### Lead Member Councillors:

##### Portfolio

Butt (Chair)	Leader of the Council
McLennan (Vice-Chair)	Deputy Leader
Farah	Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform
Hirani	Lead Member for Community Wellbeing
Miller	Lead Member for Stronger Communities
M Patel	Lead Member for Children and Young People
Southwood	Lead Member for Environment
Tatler	Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills

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**The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting**

# Supplementary Agenda

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The Background Papers referred to in the report for this item are included in this supplementary pack for ease of reference.

**Ward Affected:**  
All Wards

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20 June 2017

Email: [ndr@communities.gov.uk](mailto:ndr@communities.gov.uk)

**Chief Finance Officers of English Billing Authorities**

**FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE BUSINESS RATES SECTION**

Dear Chief Finance Officer

**Business Rates Information Letter (4/2017): Spring Budget Update**

This is the fourth business rates information letter to be issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government this year. Previous letters are available on the internet at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/business-rates-information-letters>

or for archived letters:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/localgovernmentfinance/businessrates/busratesinformationletters/>.

- **Supporting Small Businesses**
- **New Discretionary Relief Scheme**
- **New Business Rate Relief Scheme for Pubs**

**Supporting Small Businesses**

At the Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced that a scheme of relief would be made available to those ratepayers facing large increases as a result of the loss of small business or rural rate relief. Initial terms for this scheme were published with the BRIL (2/2017) on 9 March 2017.

The transitional relief scheme does not provide support in respect of changes in reliefs. Therefore, those ratepayers who are losing some or all of their small business or rural rate relief may be facing very large percentage increases in bills from 1 April 2017.

On the 16 May a letter was sent to Chief Finance Officers, it included as an annex final guidance on the scheme to authorities about the operation and delivery of this policy for more complex cases. It includes full technical guidance to identify all eligible ratepayers for the duration of the scheme. For completeness, this guidance is attached at **Annex A**.

Local authorities are expected to have begun implementing this scheme for simple cases with the initial terms published on 9 March 2017, with a full rollout to all cases with the attached final terms.

### **Discretionary Relief Scheme**

At the Spring Budget, the Government announced the establishment of a £300m discretionary fund over four years from 2017/18 to support businesses in their area. The £300m will cover the four years from 2017/18:

- £175m in 2017/18
- £85m in 2018/19
- £35m in 2019/20
- £5m in 2020/21

DCLG published a consultation of the design of the scheme and draft allocations to billing authorities on 9 March. Allocations were confirmed on 21 April in accordance with those draft allocations published as part of the consultation. On the 28 April the accompanying Grant Determination was also circulated to Chief Finance Officers. The allocations can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/discretionary-business-rates-relief-scheme>

The Government is grateful for all responses to the consultation, which ran until 7 April. Billing authorities have already begun developing their own discretionary schemes to deliver targeted support to the most hard-pressed ratepayers. For avoidance of doubt, the design and administration of schemes is for authorities to decide and does not necessarily need to follow the distribution methodology used in the consultation to determine allocations.

### **Support for Pubs**

At the Spring Budget, the Government also announced a new relief scheme for pubs that have a rateable value of below £100,000. Under the scheme, eligible pubs will receive a £1000 discount on their bill. The relief will have effect for 2017/18.

DCLG has worked with key industry stakeholders to determine the operation of the relief scheme for pubs. Many authorities have already begun the work to identify eligible pubs in their area and final guidance on the design and delivery of the scheme is attached at **Annex B**.

### **Administration of New Reliefs**

Billing authorities are expected to deliver the scheme through the use of their discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended. Billing authorities will be compensated through a Section 31 grant for the cost to the authority of granting the relief – up to a maximum amount based on the authority's allocation of the £300m fund. The grants will be made quarterly in arrears for the duration of the scheme.

We expect billing authorities to have communicated with ratepayers on the confirmed terms of the new schemes for relief covered by the BRIL (2/2017) and this BRIL (4/2017), including anticipated timescale for rebilling where necessary.

### **New Burdens**

DCLG recognises that implementing these schemes places additional burdens on billing authorities. In accordance with the New Burdens doctrine, the Department has conducted an assessment of the expected reasonable additional costs of new software and staffing/administration around rebilling affected ratepayers.

Full details of this funding will be published shortly so we encourage local authorities to continue to progress with this in mind.

### **Progress Review**

We are conducting a short, progress update survey for local authorities to update us on their work to date. We would be grateful for responses from local authorities by Friday 30 June 2017. The survey can be found at: [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DCLG\\_Budget\\_2017](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DCLG_Budget_2017)

In addition to this, the Department will undertake a wider data collection exercise to review the implementation of the schemes once underway. The Department will continue to liaise with local government stakeholders as to the form this will take and will confirm with local authorities in due course.

## Supporting Small Businesses: Annex A

### About this Guidance

1. This guidance is intended to support local authorities in administering the scheme of relief for properties losing some or all of their Small Businesses Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief as a result of the 2017 Revaluation – known as “Supporting Small Business” relief. This Guidance applies to England only.
2. This guidance sets out the criteria which central government will use to determine funding relief for properties eligible for Supporting Small Businesses relief. The Guidance does not replace existing legislation on any other relief.
3. Enquiries on this measure should be addressed to:  
[ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

## Introduction

4. For 2016/17, eligible ratepayers<sup>1</sup> with a rateable value less than or equal to £6,000 are entitled to 100% small business rate relief. Those with a rateable value of between £6,000 and £12,000 enjoy tapered relief from 100% to 0%. Following the measures in the 2016 Budget, we are increasing these thresholds from 1 April 2017 to £12,000 for the 100% relief and £15,000 for the tapered relief. This ensures that most ratepayers currently entitled to small business rate relief will pay less or nothing following the revaluation. However, some ratepayers that are facing large increases in their rateable value will lose some or all of their small business rate relief.
5. For 2016/17 the sole post office, general store, pub or petrol station in rural settlements are (subject to rateable value thresholds) entitled to 50% rate relief. This is increasing to 100% relief from 1 April 2017. However, some ratepayers currently eligible for rural rate relief may lose that entitlement if their rateable value increases above the threshold due to the revaluation.
6. The transitional relief scheme does not provide support in respect of changes in reliefs. Therefore, those ratepayers who are losing some or all of their small business or rural rate relief may be facing large percentage increases in bills from 1 April 2017.
7. In the Spring Budget the Chancellor announced that a new scheme of relief would be made available to those ratepayers facing large increases as a result of the loss of small business or rural rate relief due to the revaluation. This document provides guidance to authorities about the operation and delivery of this policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Businesses with more than one property are only eligible for small business rate relief if their additional property or properties all have rateable values of under £2,600, and the total rateable value of all their properties are below £18,000 (£25,500 in London).

## How will the relief be provided?

8. The government is not changing the legislation around transitional relief<sup>2</sup>. Instead the government will, in line with the eligibility criteria for the Supporting Small Businesses scheme, reimburse billing authorities that use their discretionary relief powers, under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended<sup>3</sup>, to grant relief. Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of the Supporting Small Businesses relief (using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003). In view of the fact that such expenditure will be reimbursed, the government expects billing authorities to grant Supporting Small Businesses relief to all qualifying ratepayers.
9. Central government will reimburse billing authorities and those major precepting authorities within the rates retention system for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the relief that falls within the definitions in this guidance. DCLG will also undertake a New Burdens assessment of the IT and administrative costs in local government associated with the Supporting Small Businesses scheme.

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<sup>2</sup> The Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265

<sup>3</sup> Section 47 was amended by the Localism Act 2011

## Who is eligible for the relief and how much relief will be available?

10. This section describes in principle the Supporting Small Business Scheme. Local authorities should use the detailed guidance at section 2 to determine eligibility and calculate bills. The Supporting Small Businesses relief will help those ratepayers who as a result of the change in their rateable value at the revaluation are losing some or all of their small business or rural rate relief and, as a result, are facing large increases in their bills.
11. To support these ratepayers, the Supporting Small Businesses relief will ensure that the increase per year in the bills<sup>4</sup> of these ratepayers is limited to the greater of:
  - a. a percentage increase p.a. of 5%, 7.5%, 10%, 15% and 15% 2017/18 to 2021/22 all plus inflation. Unlike the transitional relief scheme, for the first year of the scheme the percentage increase is taken against the bill for 31 March 2017 after small business rate relief or rural rate relief , or
  - b. a cash value of £600 per year (£50 per month). This cash minimum increase ensures that those ratepayers paying nothing or very small amounts in 2016/17 after small business rate relief are brought into paying something.
12. In the first year of the scheme, this means all ratepayers losing some or all of their small business rate relief or rural rate relief will see the increase in their bill capped at £600. The cash minimum increase is £600 per year thereafter. This means that ratepayers who are currently paying nothing under small business rate relief and are losing all of their entitlement to relief (i.e. moving from £6,000 rateable value or less to more than £15,000) would under this scheme be paying £3,000 in year 5.
13. Those on the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme whose 2017 rateable values are £51,000 or more will not be liable to pay the supplement (1.3p) to fund small business rate relief while they are eligible for the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme.
14. Ratepayers remain in the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme for either 5 years or until they reach the bill they would have paid without the scheme<sup>5</sup>. A change of ratepayers will not affect eligibility for the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme but eligibility will be lost if the property falls vacant or becomes occupied by a charity or Community Amateur Sports Club.

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<sup>4</sup> Prior to the Business Rates Supplement (2p for properties in London with a rateable value of more than £70,000) and City of London multiplier (which is 0.5p higher for all properties in London). The level of these supplements are unchanged at the revaluation but changes in the amounts paid through the supplements are outside the transitional relief scheme and the Supporting Small Businesses scheme.

<sup>5</sup> This will be the bill in the main transitional relief scheme.

15. There is no 2nd property test for eligibility for the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme. However, those ratepayers who during 2016/17 lost entitlement to small business rate relief because they failed the 2nd property test but have, under the rules for small business rate relief, been given a 12 month period of grace before their relief ended can continue on the scheme for the remainder of their 12 month period of grace.
16. Guidance on eligibility and the value of the Supporting Small Businesses relief is at Section 2.

## Recalculations of relief

17. As with all reliefs, the amount of relief awarded under the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme should be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or the hereditament. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.
18. The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1059)<sup>6</sup> require authorities to provide ratepayers with at least one year's notice in writing before any decision to revoke or vary a decision so as to increase the amount the ratepayer has to pay takes effect. Such a revocation or variation of a decision can only take effect at the end of a financial year. But within these regulations, local authorities may still make decisions which are conditional upon eligibility criteria or rules for calculating relief which allow the amount of relief to be amended within the year to reflect changing circumstances.
19. Therefore, when making an award for Supporting Small Businesses relief, local authorities should ensure in the conditions of the award that the relief can be recalculated in the event of a change to the rating list for the property concerned (retrospective or otherwise). This is so that the relief can be recalculated if the rateable value changes.

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<sup>6</sup> The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 No. 1059.

## State Aid

20. State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to State Aid. However the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013)<sup>7</sup>.
21. The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a rolling three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years). Local authorities should familiarise themselves with the terms of this State Aid exemption, in particular the types of undertaking that are excluded from receiving De Minimis aid (Article 1), the relevant definition of undertaking (Article 2(2)<sup>8</sup>) and the requirement to convert the aid into Euros<sup>9</sup>. They should ensure each business has not exceeded its threshold through all sources of state funding<sup>10</sup>.
22. To administer De Minimis it is necessary for the local authority to establish that the award of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of De Minimis aid. Note that the threshold only relates to aid provided under the De Minimis Regulations (aid under other exemptions or outside the scope of State Aid is not relevant to the De Minimis calculation). Where local authorities have further questions about De Minimis or other aspects of State Aid law, they should seek advice from their legal department in the first instance<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:352:0001:0008:EN:PDF>

<sup>8</sup> The 'New SME Definition user guide and model declaration' provides further guidance:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme\\_definition/sme\\_user\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts\\_grants/info\\_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro_en.cfm)

<sup>10</sup> Article 3(2) of the De Minimis Regulation

<sup>11</sup> Detailed State Aid guidance can also be found at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/15277/National\\_State\\_Aid\\_Law\\_Requirements.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15277/National_State_Aid_Law_Requirements.pdf)

## Other Reliefs

23. Hereditaments eligible for charity or Community Amateur Sports Club relief or hereditaments which are unoccupied are not eligible for Supporting Small Businesses Relief. And, for the avoidance of doubt, small business rate relief or rural rate relief should not be applied to further reduce the bill found under Supporting Small Business relief (to avoid the double counting of relief – see the detailed rules in section 2). For example,
- a ratepayer eligible for Small Business Rate Relief whose rateable value has increased from £3,000 (paying £0 in 2016/17) to £14,000 would be paying the following in 2017/18 before Supporting Small Businesses relief:
    - Bill before reliefs: £6,524,
    - Bill after transitional relief: £1,555
    - Bill after Small Business Rate Relief (@1/3) £1.037.
  - After Supporting Small Business Relief the bill for 2017/18 would be reduced to £600. No further Small Business Rate Relief should be applied to the £600 bill.
24. The same principle applies to properties for which a Section 44A certificate has been granted (apportionment of rateable values for partly occupied properties). The presence of a section 44A certificate should not further reduce the bill found under the Supporting Small Business scheme.
25. All other discretionary reliefs, including those funded by section 31 grants, should be considered after the application of Supporting Small Businesses relief. Following discussions with local government stakeholders and their software providers, the expectation is that Supporting Small Businesses relief will be shown on the bill as an adjustment to the chargeable amount after any transitional relief – i.e. it will appear as a deduction.

## Compensation Arrangements

26. Central government will reimburse billing authorities and those major precepting authorities for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the Supporting Small Businesses relief. Local authorities will be asked to provide an estimate of their likely total cost for providing the relief in a one off estimate for 2017/18. Central government will then provide payments to local authorities for their share of the cost of the estimated relief for 2017/18. The final cost to local authorities will be calculated and reconciled following the NNDR3 for 2017/18.
27. Guidance for local authorities on how to calculate the value of the section 31 grant will be included in the guidance notes for completing the National Non-Domestic Returns (NNDRs). However, in line with the New Burden's principle, section 31 compensation will be calculated having regard to the additional costs on local government of awarding the relief (before any other section 47 reliefs). Therefore, the section 31 grant for Supporting Small Businesses should be calculated by:
  - a. taking the chargeable amount which would have applied for the hereditament after the transitional arrangements and other mandatory reliefs but before discretionary reliefs,  
  
and deducting
  - b. the chargeable amount found under the Supporting Small Business scheme before other discretionary reliefs.
28. The same principle will apply for calculation Transitional Protection Payments (TPPs) for the purposes of non-domestic rating income in the rates retention scheme. TPPs on NNDR1s and NNDR3s will be calculating ignoring the Supporting Small Businesses scheme.

## Section 2: Detailed guidance for operation of the Supporting Small Businesses (SSB) scheme

### Day 1 Eligibility for the Scheme

29. For 1 April 2017, the supporting small businesses (SSB) relief scheme applies to hereditaments for which<sup>12</sup>:
- a. the chargeable amount for 31 March 2017 is calculated in accordance with section 43(4B) or (6B),
  - b. in relation to 43(4B) the value of E for 31 March 2017 is greater than 1,
  - c. the chargeable amount for 1 April 2017 is found in accordance with section 43(4), 43(4B), 43(6A) or where regulations 12(3), 12(7) or 12(9) of the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265 applies, and
  - d. the chargeable amount for 1 April 2017 is more than (£600/365) higher than the chargeable amount for 31 March 2017.
30. Where for 31 March 2017 the chargeable amount has been found under section 47, then eligibility for SSB should be determined as if section 47 did not apply.
31. Where the hereditament is shown in a local list for the area of a special authority (i.e. the City of London), then eligibility for SSB should be determined as if the special authority's small business non-domestic rating multiplier was 48.4p for 2016/17 and 46.6p for 2017/18.

### Continued eligibility for the scheme after 1 April 2017

32. After 1 April 2017, the Supporting Small Businesses (SSB) scheme will cease to apply where:
- a. the chargeable amount for a day found under the SSB scheme is the same as or more than the chargeable amount found in the absence of the SSB scheme. This ensures that where, for example, the minimum increase in the chargeable amount in the SSB scheme would take the bill above the level it would otherwise have been then the hereditament will drop out of the SSB scheme. It also ensures that where, for example, with effect from after 1/4/17, the hereditament becomes eligible for 100% Small Business Rate Relief then they also fall out of the SSB scheme,
  - b. the chargeable amount for a day would otherwise fall to be found by section 43(5) or where paragraph 12(5) or sub-paragraphs 2(4), 3(4), 4(4), 5(4) of Schedule 2 of the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable

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<sup>12</sup> unless otherwise stated, references are to the Local Government Finance Act 1988

Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265 applies (charities or registered community amateur sports clubs), or

c. the hereditament for a day is unoccupied.

33. Furthermore, where the ratepayer during 2016/17 lost entitlement to small business rate relief because they failed the 2nd property test but have, under the rules for small business rate relief, been given a 12 month period of grace before their relief ended (and therefore was still entitled to small business rate relief on 31 March 2017), then eligibility for the SSB scheme will cease at the end of that 12 months period of grace.

34. Hereditaments which cease to be entitled to Supporting Small Businesses for a day cannot return to eligibility if their circumstances change from a later day. For example, if a property falls unoccupied it will not then be eligible for Supporting Small Businesses relief if it subsequently becomes occupied again.

### **Chargeable Amount under the Supporting Small Businesses Scheme**

35. Where the Supporting Small Businesses scheme applies then DCLG will fund local authorities to apply a chargeable amount under section 47 of the 1988 Act for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022 found in accordance with the rules in [Part 1 to Part 3 of] the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265 subject to the following changes:

a. BL for 2017/18 is the chargeable amount for 31 March 2017 x 365 (on the assumption that section 47 did not apply for 31 March 2017 and on the assumption in the City of London that the special authority's small business non-domestic rating multiplier was 48.4p for 2016/17). This ensures the starting base liability for hereditaments eligible for SSB include the SBRR or rural rate relief for 31 March,

b. Where a certificate has been issued under regulations 17 or 18 then BL for 2017/18 should be found in line with a) above but on the assumption that the rateable value in the rating list was the rateable values as certified,

c. References to "(BL x AF)" are to "(BL x AF) or (BL + 600) whichever is the greater". This ensures the bill increase is the greater or £600 or the increase under the caps in the transitional relief scheme,

d. AF is found in accordance with regulation 10(6) irrespective of the rateable value of the hereditament for 1 April 2017. This ensures only the cap on increases for small properties is applied in the SSB scheme irrespective of the actual rateable value of the hereditament,

- e. regulation 12(6)(b) is omitted. This ensures SBRR is not also applied to the capped bill in the SSB scheme. This avoids double counting of relief as illustrated at paragraph 23 above,
  - f. the reference to “2” in regulation 12(8) is “1”. This ensures rural rate relief is not also applied to the capped bill in the SSB scheme. This avoids double counting of relief,
  - g. “U” is taken to have a value of 0 throughout. This ensures that any hereditament whose rateable value is £51,000 or more does not have to pay the 1.3p supplement whilst eligible for SSB relief,
  - h. for a year (the year concerned) other than 2017/18, BL is  $(BL \times AF)$  or  $(BL + 600)$  from the year immediately the year concerned whichever is the greater.
36. No change is made to the meaning of NCA. However, as discussed above, eligibility for Supporting Small Businesses relief ceases when the chargeable amount for a day found under the Supporting Small Businesses scheme is the same as or more than the chargeable amount found outside the scheme.
37. Regulation 6 (special authorities) will apply as normal under the Supporting Small Businesses scheme. This ensures ratepayers in the City of London continue to pay any additional amount attributable to the City multiplier.
38. For the avoidance of doubt, the rules for changes in rateable value with effect from after 1 April 2017 (regulation 13) will continue to apply as normal subject to the amendments in paragraph 35 above. This ensures that, for example, later increases in rateable value are paid in full in the normal way<sup>13</sup>.

## Splits and mergers

39. The SSB scheme will apply to hereditaments:

- a. coming into existence because of the circumstances described in paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 of Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265,
- b. where one of the hereditaments from which the new hereditament was formed in whole or in part was for the day immediately before the creation day eligible for the SSB scheme, and
- c. the circumstances described at paragraph 32 above do not apply for the creation day in respect of the hereditament.

40. After the creation day, the SSB scheme will cease to apply in the circumstances described in paragraph 32 above.

41. The number of hereditaments eligible for SSB which then split or merge is likely to be very small and devising rules in particular for mergers with

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<sup>13</sup> based on the small business non-domestic multiplier. This is because U is taken to have a value of 0 throughout.

properties outside of the SSB scheme would be complex. Therefore, in discussions with local authority stakeholders, DCLG has concluded it would be disproportionate to devise detailed rules to prescribe the chargeable amounts in the various circumstances which could arise from a split or a merger.

42. Instead, for hereditaments meeting the criteria in paragraph 39 and 40 above, DCLG will fund local authorities to apply a chargeable amount under section 47 of the 1988 Act found in accordance with the following principle:
  - a. that the protection offered by the SSB scheme (that the bill will not rise by the greater of £600 p.a. or the transitional relief caps) will continue to apply in principle to that part of the newly created hereditament which was immediately before the creation day in the SSB scheme, and
  - b. that increases (or reductions) in overall rateable value arising from the split or merger are not subject to the protection of the SSB scheme.
43. For simple splits of hereditaments previously eligible for SSB, authorities may wish to simply apportion the chargeable amount in the SSB scheme for the hereditament before the split in line with the change in rateable value from the split (i.e. in line with the principle in Schedule 2 of Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265).
44. For mergers and reorganisations, authorities will have to estimate the degree to which, in line with the principle of the SSB scheme, that part of the hereditament which was formerly eligible for SSB should continue to receive support under the SSB scheme. DCLG does not expect authorities to seek any formal apportionments of the rateable value for this purpose.

## **Support for Pubs Guidance: Annex B**

### **1. About this guidance**

- 1.1 This guidance is intended to support local authorities in administering the “Pubs Relief Scheme” announced in the Budget on 8 March 2017. This guidance applies to England only.
- 1.2 This guidance sets out the detailed criteria, which local Government will use to provide funding relief for pubs. This guidance does not replace existing legislation or any other relief.
- 1.3 Enquiries on this measure should be addressed to:  
[ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 The Government recognises the important role that pubs play in urban and rural communities across the country. At Spring Budget 2017, the Chancellor announced a £1,000 business rate discount for public houses with a rateable value of up to £100,000 for one year from 1 April 2017. This was part of a wider £435m package to support businesses – including pubs - facing significant increases in rate bills following the business rates revaluation. This included £110m of support for small businesses losing small business rates relief (SBRR) or rural rate relief (RRR) and providing local authorities with funding to support £300 million of discretionary relief.
- 2.2 This document provides guidance on the pubs relief scheme. It sets out how the scheme should operate and the eligibility criteria that should apply.
- 2.3 The Government expects local billing authorities to use their discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant relief to all qualifying ratepayers. We will reimburse local authorities using grants under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, provided they have acted in accordance with guidance. No new legislation will be required to deliver the scheme. Sections below explain how the scheme will operate, the level of funding available, and the means of compensation.
- 2.4 The guidance will be of interest to local authorities, operators of pubs and similar businesses, and their representative bodies.

### **3. Eligibility criteria - which properties should benefit**

- 3.1 This section describes in principle the Pubs Relief Scheme. Local authorities should use this section to determine eligibility for the relief. The scheme will be available to eligible occupied properties with a rateable value of less than £100,000. The majority of pubs are independently owned or managed and will not be part of chains. Where pubs are part of a chain, relief will be available for each eligible property in the chain, subject to meeting State Aid requirements (see section 5 of this guidance).
- 3.2 There is no definitive description of a traditional pub or public house in law which could be readily used by local authorities to determine eligibility. The objective has been to adopt an approach that makes the design and eligibility of the scheme easy to implement by local authorities in a clear and consistent way, is widely accepted by the industry and which is consistent with the Government's policy intention as set out in this section.
- 3.3 The Government's policy intention is that eligible pubs should:
- be open to the general public
  - allow free entry other than when occasional entertainment is provided
  - allow drinking without requiring food to be consumed
  - permit drinks to be purchased at a bar.

For these purposes, it should exclude:

- restaurants
- cafes
- nightclubs
- hotels
- snack bars
- guesthouses
- boarding houses
- sporting venues
- music venues
- festival sites
- theatres
- museums
- exhibition halls
- cinemas

- concert halls
- casinos

- 3.4 The proposed exclusions in the list at para 3.3 is not intended to be exhaustive and it will be for the local authority to determine those cases where eligibility is unclear. We believe that billing authorities will already have a good understanding of the licensed premises in their areas and will be able to readily form a view on eligibility in the majority of cases. We expect local authorities to design the implementation of the scheme with regard to their business rates base and existing collection practices.
- 3.5 Where eligibility is unclear authorities should also consider broader factors in their considerations – i.e., in meeting the stated intent of policy that it demonstrates the characteristics that would lead it to be classified as a pub, for example being owned and operated by a brewery. Additionally, local authorities may also wish to consider other methods of classification, such as the planning system and the use classes order to help them decide whether a property is a pub or not. However, permission for a particular use class will not necessarily mean that the property meets the definition of a pub.

## **4. How much relief will be available?**

- 4.1 The total amount of Government-funded relief available for 2017/18 under this scheme is up to £1,000 for each eligible property. There is no relief available under this scheme for properties with a rateable value of £100,000 or more. Eligibility for the relief and the relief itself will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis.
- 4.2 In addition to the pub scheme set out in this guidance, the Chancellor announced in the Spring Budget that £110 million will be available to assist ratepayers losing small business rates relief or rural rate relief as a result of revaluation. On top of this, the Government is also making available a separate £300 million discretionary relief fund over the next four years to enable local authorities to help individual businesses that are facing increased rates bills. Both of these schemes may also be available to pubs.

## 5. Compensation arrangements

- 5.1 Government will reimburse billing authorities and those major precepting authorities for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the relief that falls within the adopted criteria for pubs relief. Local authorities will be asked to provide an estimate of their likely total cost for providing the relief in a one off estimate for 2017/18. The Government will then provide payments to local authorities for their share (under the rates retention scheme) of the cost of the estimated relief for 2017/18. The final cost to local authorities will be calculated and reconciled following the NNDR3 for 2017/18.

### **State Aid**

- 5.2 State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to State Aid. However the support for ratepayers will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the *de minimis* regulations (EC 1407/2013)<sup>14</sup>.
- 5.3 The *de minimis* regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of 'de minimis' aid over a rolling three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years). Local authorities should familiarise themselves with the terms of this State Aid exemption, in particular the types of undertaking that are excluded from receiving *de minimis* aid (Article 1), the relevant definition of undertaking (Article 2(2)<sup>15</sup>) and the requirement to convert the aid into Euros<sup>16</sup>.
- 5.4 It is necessary for the local authority to establish that the awarding of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of *de minimis* aid. Note that the threshold only relates to aid provided under the *de minimis* regulations (aid under other exemptions or outside the scope of State Aid is not relevant to the *de minimis* calculation). Where local authorities have further questions about the *de minimis* regulations or other aspects of State Aid law, they should seek advice from their legal department in the first instance<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:352:0001:0008:EN:PDF>

<sup>15</sup> The 'New SME Definition user guide and model declaration' provides further guidance:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme\\_definition/sme\\_user\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts\\_grants/info\\_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro_en.cfm)

<sup>17</sup> Detailed State Aid guidance can also be found at:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/15277/National\\_State\\_Aid\\_Law\\_Requirements.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15277/National_State_Aid_Law_Requirements.pdf)

- 5.5 Pubs are within the scope of State Aid law as companies within the hospitality sector can and do set up business in other Member States as they trade on a market. Linked enterprises are considered as one single undertaking for the application of the *de minimis* rule, therefore can receive €200,000 *de minimis* aid (including that outside of business rates relief) over three years.

### ***Discretionary Relief in Enterprise Zones?***

- 5.6 Where an eligible property is also eligible for Enterprise Zone relief, then Enterprise Zone relief should be granted and this will be funded under the rates retention scheme by a deduction from the central share. Local authorities should not provide pub relief to properties which would otherwise qualify for Enterprise Zone Government funded relief.

### ***Other Discretionary Reliefs reimbursed by s.31 grants***

- 5.7 Similarly, if a property is eligible for relief under other schemes for which s.31 grant is payable – for example, “new empty property” relief, or the Supporting Small Business Scheme– authorities should first award relief under those schemes and claim s.31 grant funding in the normal way. Only having awarded relief under those schemes, should they then award additional relief in accordance with the Pubs Relief Scheme.
- 5.8 DCLG does not prescribe whether Scheme 2 (Discretionary Relief) is calculated before or after Scheme 3 (Support for Pubs). However, DCLG understands that authorities and software companies will follow the practice of taking the Discretionary Relief before the Pubs Relief.

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## Department for Communities and Local Government

Chief Finance Officers and  
Business Rates Leads  
of Local Authorities in England

15 May 2017

Dear Colleague,

### **SPRING BUDGET 2017 – BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEMES**

We have received a number of enquiries about the business rates relief schemes announced at the Budget and we thought it might be helpful to provide you with an update to support your work.

#### Supporting small business

We published a business rates information letter on 9 March, which provided initial guidance on the operation of this scheme in 2017/18 and allowed councils to identify eligible businesses. It also encouraged councils to identify and notify businesses that were likely to benefit from this new relief and we are grateful to the many authorities that have quickly identified and provided support to eligible ratepayers. The letter can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/22017-spring-budget-support-for-business>

Since then, we have been working with billing software suppliers, local government and user groups to further develop the guidance to cover subsequent years and more complex cases. The updated guidance, attached at annex A, sets out a more detailed description of the operation of the scheme to allow software providers to code changes accurately and councils to take forward implementation.

#### Local discretionary relief schemes

We consulted on a proposed allocation methodology and funding arrangements on 9 March, with a closing date of 7 April. Allocations to local authorities were confirmed on 21 April and a grant determination sent out on 28 April. Councils should now be proceeding with developing their local schemes.

Some issues have been raised, in particular the ability to flex money between financial years to maximise value for money. We will provide further advice on this

point as soon as possible. There have also been some suggestions that money has to be spent in accordance with the distribution methodology included in the consultation. However, this is not the case. The methodology set out in the consultation simply provides a proxy for need, and determines the allocation for each billing authority. It is for each authority to design its scheme as it sees fit.

A number of authorities have asked why the sums in the grant determination letter are different from the allocations set out in the consultation document. This is because the allocations reflect the maximum amount of relief that authorities can award to ratepayers. The sums in the grant determination letter, on the other hand, reflect the financial impact on local authorities of awarding that amount of relief, having regard to the central and local shares under the business rates retention scheme. For example, in an area where the central and local shares are both 50%, the award of £100 of relief will result in a loss of business rates income under the rates retention scheme of £50 to central government and £50 to the local authorities in the area. Hence, the grant determination letters give local government £50 for every £100 of allocation. In areas where the local share is higher – e.g. London, where it is 67%, or the 100% pilot areas, where it is 100% - the grant determinations are, respectively, £67 and £100 for every £100 of allocation.

Under the terms of the grant determinations, all the compensation is being paid to billing authorities, in the first instance. However, the intention is that the sum is to be shared between billing and major precepting authorities in the normal way. Government will arrange for this automatically at NNDR3 stage and the amount of grant due to each of the billing and major precepting authorities will be automatically calculated from data provided in the form. We will reconcile these calculations against the amounts paid under the grant determinations and make/receive reconciliation payments to/from major precepting and billing authorities.

### Support for pubs

Following the Budget announcement, we engaged with trade bodies and local government representatives on the detail of the pubs relief scheme. We understand that many authorities have already taken steps to identify pubs within the parameters set out at the Budget and final guidance on the operation and scope of this scheme will be issued as soon as possible.

### New burdens

We have previously confirmed that new burdens funding would be paid to cover the additional cost of administering these relief schemes. We have asked local authority software user group representatives for evidence on likely costs, beyond those which

would normally be covered, in line with our usual practice. We will confirm the amounts to be paid to each billing authority shortly.

If you have any further queries, please contact us at [ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Chris Megainey', with a large, stylized initial 'C' and 'M'.

**Chris Megainey**  
**Deputy Director, Local Taxation**

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Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

## Business Rates

Consultation on proposals on the design and  
implementation of the locally administered Business Rates  
Relief Scheme



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March 2017

ISBN: 978-1-4098-5020-5

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# 1. Scope of the consultation

**A consultation paper issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government on behalf of the Secretary of State**

<b>Topic of this consultation:</b>	Business rates. This consultation paper sets out the Government's proposals for the design of a discretionary business rates support scheme, administered by local government.
<b>Scope of this consultation:</b>	<p>At the Budget on 8 March the Chancellor announced that the Government would provide £300m to support those business most effected by the revaluation.</p> <p>The Department for Communities and Local Government is consulting on proposals for how local government would design and implement this scheme.</p>
<b>Geographical scope:</b>	As a devolved function the proposed scheme only applies to authorities in England.
<b>Impact Assessment:</b>	No impact assessment has been produced for this consultation because this is a discretionary activity.

## Basic Information

<b>To:</b>	This consultation is open to everyone. We particularly seek the views of all English local authorities and the Local Government Association and of businesses and their representative bodies.
<b>Body responsible for the consultation:</b>	The Department for Communities and Local Government is responsible for conducting the consultation.
<b>Duration:</b>	The consultation will begin on 9 March 2017. The consultation will run for four weeks and will close on 7 April 2017. All responses should be received by no later than 7 April 2017.
<b>Enquiries:</b>	<p>During the consultation, if you have any enquiries, please contact:</p> <p>email: <a href="mailto:ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk">ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Tel: 030 3444 2518</p>
<b>How to respond:</b>	<p>You can respond by email or by post.</p> <p>Please respond by email to: <a href="mailto:ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk">ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk</a></p>

Alternatively, please send postal responses to:

Shaun Morroll  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
2nd Floor, NE, Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Responses should be received by close on 7 April 2017.

When responding, please make it clear which questions you are responding to.

When you reply it would be very useful if you could confirm whether you are replying as an individual or submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation and include:

- your name
- your position (if applicable)
- the name and address of your organisation (if applicable)and
- an e mail address (if you have one)

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 At the Budget on 8 March, the Chancellor announced that the Government would make available a discretionary fund of £300 million over four years from 2017-18 to support those businesses that face the steepest increases in their business rates bills as a result of the revaluation. Local government is best placed to determine how this fund should be targeted and administered to support those businesses and locations within their area that are in the greatest need.
- 2.2 The intention is that every billing authority in England will be provided with a share of the £300 million to support their local businesses. This will be administered through billing authorities discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Act 1988.
- 2.3 The Government believes that local authorities are best placed to judge the particular circumstances of local ratepayers and direct the funding where it is most needed to support local economies. The Government will allocate the available funding to each billing authority area based on assumptions about how authorities will target their relief scheme.
- 2.4 The proposed funding allocations set out in this consultation paper are for the total amount of relief to be provided to ratepayers. Under the 50% business rates retention system, the reduction in business rates receipts resulting from the increased award of discretionary relief will generally result in a reduction in local authorities' business rates income under the 50% rates retention system of 50% of the value of the relief given. In London, and those areas which are piloting 100% rates retention from 2017-18, the loss of income will be higher. Once the 100% rates retention system is introduced everywhere with effect from 2019-20, authorities will see their income reduced by the entire value of the relief given. For any year, the funding arrangements will ensure that all authorities are compensated for the loss of income they incur by means of grant payments under s.31 of the Local Government Act 2003, or transfer payments between authorities.

## **3. Consultation Parameters**

- 3.1 This consultation paper seeks views on the:
- Allocation of resources to local authorities (section 4)
  - Arrangements under which local authorities will be compensated for loss of income (section 5)

- Operation of discretionary relief schemes, including conditions to be attached to s.31 grants (section 6).

## 4. The Allocation of Resources to Local Authorities

- 4.1 The Government will make £300 million available to local authorities over four years from 2017-18, to provide discretionary relief to those ratepayers facing significant increases in their bills following the revaluation.
- 4.2 The Government is already providing support to such ratepayers through the transitional arrangements that it put in place following the revaluation; and through the additional support, announced at the Budget, to ratepayers who are losing some or all of their small business rate relief and to pubs.
- 4.3 The further £300 million is being made available for local authorities to develop their own discretionary relief schemes to deliver further targeted support to those hard-pressed ratepayers.
- 4.4 It will be for billing authorities, in collaboration with other authorities operating within their area, to design their discretionary relief schemes and determine the eligibility of ratepayers for support. The schemes must clearly set out the criteria that ratepayers across the local authority area, or within specific locations within their areas need to meet in order to qualify for discretionary relief.
- 4.5 The total resource available to support local authority's discretionary relief schemes is:

**£ 300million**

<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>
<b>175</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>5</b>

- 4.6 To allocate the resource between authorities the Government has assumed that authorities will provide support only to those ratepayers who are facing an increase in their bills following revaluation – and will make this a condition of the grant. It further assumes that, by and large, more support will be provided to;
- ratepayers or localities that face the most significant increases in bills; and
  - ratepayers occupying lower value properties

- 4.7 In line with those broad assumptions about how authorities will design their transitional relief schemes, we propose to allocate the available resource to each billing authority by:
- i. working out the total increase in bills (excluding the impact of transitional relief and other reliefs), for every rateable property in the billing authority's area that satisfies both the following conditions:
    - a. the rateable property has a rateable value for 2017-18 that is less than £200,000;
    - b. the increase in the rateable property's 2017-18 bill is more than 12.5% compared to its 2016-17 bill (before reliefs);
  - ii. summing the total increase in bills in all billing authority areas and distributing the available funding in each year in accordance with the formula:

$$A \times B/C,$$

Where:

A is the total funding available for the year;

B is the total increase in bills in an individual authority's area; and

C is the sum of the total increase in bills in all local authority areas.

- 4.8 Where the above formula produces an allocation of less than £100,000 in the first year of the programme, the amounts are topped-up to £100,000, in every case except that of the Isles of Scilly, which only has 445 rateable properties in total.

**Question 1: Do you agree that individual local authorities should be responsible for designing and implementing their own discretionary relief schemes, having regard to local circumstances and reflecting local economies?**

**Question 2: Are the Government's assumptions about the design of local discretionary relief schemes reasonable?**

**Question 3: Is the allocation methodology reasonable?**

## **5. Compensation Arrangements**

- 5.1 The allocations set out at appendix 1 represent the maximum amount of discretionary relief that billing authorities can award for which they and major precepting authorities will be compensated through s.31 grant.

- 5.2 Any discretionary relief paid by billing authorities in respect of “revaluation support” in excess of their allocation will not attract s.31 grant.
- 5.3 In each year of the scheme, we propose to pay billing and major precepting authorities s.31 grant equivalent to their loss of income under the business rates retention scheme. Subject to paragraph 5.4 below, payments will be based on estimates of the relief to be provided to ratepayers, capped at the maximum of that year’s allocation (as set out at appendix 1). Grant will be paid to authorities in four equal instalments, quarterly in arrears – i.e. at the end of June, September and December 2017 and the end of March 2018.
- 5.4 The Government recognises that local relief schemes will vary across the country according to the circumstances of local ratepayers and wants to ensure that the profile of payments set out at appendix 1 provides the most effective support to local ratepayers and secures maximum value for money over the four years of the programme. The Government therefore would welcome views on whether local authorities should be given some flexibility to switch resources between years.
- 5.5 As set out above, in the same way as for other payments under the business rates retention system, we propose that payments to billing authorities and major precepting authorities should be made during the course of the year, based on estimates of the amount of relief that the billing authority will give. Amounts will be reconciled following the end of the year when outturn figures are available; with payments of any difference being made to, or from, billing authorities and major precepting authorities, depending on whether outturn figures are higher or lower than the original estimates.
- 5.6 The current programme will span the introduction of 100% business rates retention in 2019-20; and before then, we may create more 100% business rates pilots in 2018-19. Accordingly, local authorities’ shares of business rates under the business rates retention scheme will change over the life of the discretionary relief programme. If authorities are given flexibility to switch resources between years (see paragraph 5.4 above) this could result in a s.31 payment for a previous year being switched into a later year. If this were to happen and the payment was then insufficient to reimburse an authority for its loss of income in that year because the authority’s share of business rates had increased, the Government would provide the authority with additional s.31 grant to ensure that it is fully compensated for the relief given, up to the maximum of that year’s “total pot”.
- 5.7 To assist authorities with the calculation of in-year payments, end-year reconciliations and the annual switching of a proportion of any year’s grant into later

years, the Department will provide for the necessary data entries and calculations as part of NNDR1s and NNDR3s.

- 5.8 As 2017-18 NNDR1s are now complete, exceptionally, for 2017-18, billing authorities will be asked to complete a one-off estimate of the relief they will grant in that year at the end of June to coincide with the first payment of s.31 grant.

**Question 4: Do you think that authorities should have some flexibility to switch resources between years to ensure relief provided meets local need and provides maximum value for money?**

**Question 5: Do you agree with the proposal that s.31 grant should be paid to compensate authorities for their loss of income under the rates retention scheme up to the maximum of that year's "total pot"?**

**Question 6: Do you agree with the proposals for administering payments, including in-year payments based on estimates, end-year reconciliations and payments quarterly in arrears?**

## 6. Operational Issues

### *Determining Schemes*

- 6.1 Billing authorities will be responsible for designing the discretionary relief schemes that are to operate in their areas. However, the Government expects billing authorities to discuss options with their major precepting authorities at an early stage and to consult them before adopting any scheme and where applicable consult their combined authority.
- 6.2 We will place conditions on the s.31 grant that we pay billing authorities requiring them to consult their major precepting authorities and where applicable their combined authority.

### *Notice Periods*

- 6.3 The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1059)<sup>1</sup> require authorities to provide ratepayers with at least one year's notice in writing before any decision to revoke or vary a decision so as to increase the amount the ratepayer has to pay takes effect. Such a revocation or variation of a decision can only take effect at the end of a financial year. But within these regulations, local authorities may still make decisions which are conditional upon

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<sup>1</sup> The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 No. 1059.

eligibility criteria or rules for calculating relief which allow the amount of relief to be amended within the year to reflect changing circumstances.

- 6.4 Therefore, when making an award for the support for ratepayers, local authorities must ensure in the conditions of the award that the relief can be recalculated in the event of a change to the rating list for the property concerned (retrospective or otherwise). This is so that the relief can be re-calculated if the rateable value changes.

### **State Aid**

- 6.5 State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to State Aid. However the support for ratepayers will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013)<sup>2</sup>.

- 6.6 The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years). Local authorities should familiarise themselves with the terms of this State Aid exemption, in particular the types of undertaking that are excluded from receiving De Minimis aid (Article 1), the relevant definition of undertaking (Article 2(2)<sup>3</sup>) and the requirement to convert the aid into Euros<sup>4</sup>.

- 6.7 To administer De Minimis it is necessary for the local authority to establish that the award of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of De Minimis aid. Note that the threshold only relates to aid provided under the De Minimis Regulations (aid under other exemptions or outside the scope of State Aid is not relevant to the De Minimis calculation). Where local authorities have further questions about De Minimis or other aspects of State Aid law, they should seek advice from their legal department in the first instance ***Discretionary Relief in Enterprise Zones?***

- 6.8 Where an eligible property is also eligible for Enterprise Zone relief, then Enterprise Zone relief should be granted and, until the introduction of 100% business rates retention, this will be funded under the rates retention scheme by a deduction from the central share (or, in the case of 100% business rates plots, from a separate s.31 grant). Local authorities should not provide discretionary relief under their schemes for “revaluation support” to properties which would otherwise qualify for Enterprise Zone government funded relief.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:352:0001:0008:EN:PDF>

<sup>3</sup> The ‘New SME Definition user guide and model declaration’ provides further guidance:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme\\_definition/sme\\_user\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts\\_grants/info\\_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro_en.cfm)

6.9 If a property in an Enterprise Zone is not eligible for Enterprise Zone relief, or that relief has ended, discretionary relief for “revaluation support” may be granted.

***Other Discretionary Reliefs reimbursed by s.31 grants***

6.10 Similarly, if a property is eligible for discretionary relief under schemes for which s.31 grant is payable – for example, “new empty property” relief, or “local newspaper relief” – authorities should first award relief under those schemes and claim s.31 grant funding in the normal way. Only having awarded relief under those schemes, should they then award additional relief for “revaluation support” in accordance with local schemes.

***Grant Conditions***

6.11 In line with paragraphs 5.6 and 6.2 above, we propose to place conditions on the s.31 grants that we give to authorities. The conditions will require grant to be used to support only ratepayers facing an increase in their bills following revaluation; and to require billing authorities to consult their major precepting authorities and, where appropriate, combined authorities, before adopting any discretionary relief support scheme.

**Question 7: Do you agree the grant conditions are appropriate?**

## **7. About this consultation**

This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent, and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department for Communities and Local Government will process your personal data in accordance with DPA and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Individual responses will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.

Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed the Consultation Principles? If not or you have any other observations about how we can improve the process please contact DCLG Consultation Co-ordinator.

Department for Communities and Local Government

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

or by email to: [consultationcoordinator@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultationcoordinator@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

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# Supporting Small Businesses Relief Scheme

## Section 31 Guidance

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# About this Guidance

1. This guidance is intended to support local authorities in administering the scheme of relief for properties losing some or all of their Small Businesses Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief as a result of the 2017 Revaluation – known as “Supporting Small Business” relief. This Guidance applies to England only.
2. This guidance sets out the criteria which central government will use to determine funding relief for properties eligible for Supporting Small Businesses relief. The Guidance does not replace existing legislation on any other relief.
3. Enquiries on this measure should be addressed to:  
[ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ndr@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

## Introduction

4. For 2016/17, eligible ratepayers<sup>1</sup> with a rateable value less than or equal to £6,000 are entitled to 100% small business rate relief. Those with a rateable value of between £6,000 and £12,000 enjoy tapered relief from 100% to 0%. Following the measures in the 2016 Budget, we are increasing these thresholds from 1 April 2017 to £12,000 for the 100% relief and £15,000 for the tapered relief. This ensures that most ratepayers currently entitled to small business rate relief will pay less or nothing following the revaluation. However, some ratepayers that are facing large increases in their rateable value will lose some or all of their small business rate relief.
5. For 2016/17 the sole post office, general store, pub or petrol station in rural settlements are (subject to rateable value thresholds) entitled to 50% rate relief. This is increasing to 100% relief from 1 April 2017. However, some ratepayers currently eligible for rural rate relief may lose that entitlement if their rateable value increases above the threshold due to the revaluation.
6. The transitional relief scheme does not provide support in respect of changes in reliefs. Therefore, those ratepayers who are losing some or all of their small business or rural rate relief may be facing large percentage increases in bills from 1 April 2017.
7. In the Spring Budget the Chancellor announced that a new scheme of relief would be made available to those ratepayers facing large increases as a result of the loss of small business or rural rate relief due to the revaluation. This document provides guidance to authorities about the operation and delivery of this policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Businesses with more than one property are only eligible for small business rate relief if their additional property or properties all have rateable values of under £2,600, and the total rateable value of all their properties are below £18,000 (£25,500 in London).

## How will the relief be provided?

8. The government is not changing the legislation around transitional relief<sup>2</sup>. Instead the government will, in line with the eligibility criteria for the Supporting Small Businesses scheme, reimburse billing authorities that use their discretionary relief powers, under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended<sup>3</sup>, to grant relief. Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of the Supporting Small Businesses relief (using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003). In view of the fact that such expenditure will be reimbursed, the government expects billing authorities to grant Supporting Small Businesses relief to all qualifying ratepayers.
9. Central government will reimburse billing authorities and those major precepting authorities within the rates retention system for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the relief that falls within the definitions in this guidance. DCLG will also undertake a New Burdens assessment of the IT and administrative costs in local government associated with the Supporting Small Businesses scheme.

## Who is eligible for the relief and how much relief will be available?

10. This section describes in principle the Supporting Small Business Scheme. Local authorities should use the detailed guidance at section 2 to determine eligibility and calculate bills. The Supporting Small Businesses relief will help those ratepayers who as a result of the change in their rateable value at the revaluation are losing some or all of their small business or rural rate relief and, as a result, are facing large increases in their bills.
11. To support these ratepayers, the Supporting Small Businesses relief will ensure that the increase per year in the bills<sup>4</sup> of these ratepayers is limited to the greater of:
  - a. a percentage increase p.a. of 5%, 7.5%, 10%, 15% and 15% 2017/18 to 2021/22 all plus inflation. Unlike the transitional relief scheme, for the first year of the scheme the percentage increase is taken against the bill for 31 March 2017 after small business rate relief or rural rate relief , or
  - b. a cash value of £600 per year (£50 per month). This cash minimum increase ensures that those ratepayers paying nothing or very small amounts in 2016/17 after small business rate relief are brought into paying something.

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<sup>2</sup> The Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265

<sup>3</sup> Section 47 was amended by the Localism Act 2011

<sup>4</sup> Prior to the Business Rates Supplement (2p for properties in London with a rateable value of more than £70,000) and City of London multiplier (which is 0.5p higher for all properties in London). The level of these supplements are unchanged at the revaluation but changes in the amounts paid through the supplements are outside the transitional relief scheme and the Supporting Small Businesses scheme.

12. In the first year of the scheme, this means all ratepayers losing some or all of their small business rate relief or rural rate relief will see the increase in their bill capped at £600. The cash minimum increase is £600 per year thereafter. This means that ratepayers who are currently paying nothing under small business rate relief and are losing all of their entitlement to relief (i.e. moving from £6,000 rateable value or less to more than £15,000) would under this scheme be paying £3,000 in year 5.
13. Those on the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme whose 2017 rateable values are £51,000 or more will not be liable to pay the supplement (1.3p) to fund small business rate relief while they are eligible for the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme.
14. Ratepayers remain in the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme for either 5 years or until they reach the bill they would have paid without the scheme<sup>5</sup>. A change of ratepayers will not affect eligibility for the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme but eligibility will be lost if the property falls vacant or becomes occupied by a charity or Community Amateur Sports Club.
15. There is no 2nd property test for eligibility for the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme. However, those ratepayers who during 2016/17 lost entitlement to small business rate relief because they failed the 2nd property test but have, under the rules for small business rate relief, been given a 12 month period of grace before their relief ended can continue on the scheme for the remainder of their 12 month period of grace.
16. Guidance on eligibility and the value of the Supporting Small Businesses relief is at Section 2.

## Recalculations of relief

17. As with all reliefs, the amount of relief awarded under the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme should be recalculated in the event of a change of circumstances. This could include, for example, a backdated change to the rateable value or the hereditament. This change of circumstances could arise during the year in question or during a later year.
18. The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989/1059)<sup>6</sup> require authorities to provide ratepayers with at least one year's notice in writing before any decision to revoke or vary a decision so as to increase the amount the ratepayer has to pay takes effect. Such a revocation or variation of a decision can only take effect at the end of a financial year. But within these regulations, local authorities may still make decisions which are conditional upon eligibility criteria or rules for calculating relief which allow the amount of relief to be amended within the year to reflect changing circumstances.

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<sup>5</sup> This will be the bill in the main transitional relief scheme.

<sup>6</sup> The Non-Domestic Rating (Discretionary Relief) Regulations 1989 No. 1059.

19. Therefore, when making an award for Supporting Small Businesses relief, local authorities should ensure in the conditions of the award that the relief can be recalculated in the event of a change to the rating list for the property concerned (retrospective or otherwise). This is so that the relief can be re-calculated if the rateable value changes.

## State Aid

20. State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to State Aid. However the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013)<sup>7</sup>.
21. The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a rolling three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years). Local authorities should familiarise themselves with the terms of this State Aid exemption, in particular the types of undertaking that are excluded from receiving De Minimis aid (Article 1), the relevant definition of undertaking (Article 2(2)<sup>8</sup>) and the requirement to convert the aid into Euros<sup>9</sup>. They should ensure each business has not exceeded its threshold through all sources of state funding<sup>10</sup>.
22. To administer De Minimis it is necessary for the local authority to establish that the award of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of De Minimis aid. Note that the threshold only relates to aid provided under the De Minimis Regulations (aid under other exemptions or outside the scope of State Aid is not relevant to the De Minimis calculation). Where local authorities have further questions about De Minimis or other aspects of State Aid law, they should seek advice from their legal department in the first instance<sup>11</sup>.

## Other Reliefs

23. Hereditaments eligible for charity or Community Amateur Sports Club relief or hereditaments which are unoccupied are not eligible for Supporting Small Businesses Relief. And, for the avoidance of doubt, small business rate relief or

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<sup>7</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:352:0001:0008:EN:PDF>

<sup>8</sup> The 'New SME Definition user guide and model declaration' provides further guidance: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme\\_definition/sme\\_user\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts\\_grants/info\\_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro_en.cfm)

<sup>10</sup> Article 3(2) of the De Minimis Regulation

<sup>11</sup> Detailed State Aid guidance can also be found at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/15277/National\\_State\\_Aid\\_Law\\_Requirements.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15277/National_State_Aid_Law_Requirements.pdf)

rural rate relief should not be applied to further reduce the bill found under Supporting Small Business relief (to avoid the double counting of relief – see the detailed rules in section 2). For example,

- a ratepayer eligible for Small Business Rate Relief whose rateable value has increased from £3,000 (paying £0 in 2016/17) to £14,000 would be paying the following in 2017/18 before Supporting Small Businesses relief:
  - Bill before reliefs: £6,524,
  - Bill after transitional relief: £1,555
  - Bill after Small Business Rate Relief (@1/3) £1.037.
- After Supporting Small Business Relief the bill for 2017/18 would be reduced to £600. No further Small Business Rate Relief should be applied to the £600 bill.

24. The same principle applies to properties for which a Section 44A certificate has been granted (apportionment of rateable values for partly occupied properties). The presence of a section 44A certificate should not further reduce the bill found under the Supporting Small Business scheme.
25. All other discretionary reliefs, including those funded by section 31 grants, should be considered after the application of Supporting Small Businesses relief. Following discussions with local government stakeholders and their software providers, the expectation is that Supporting Small Businesses relief will be shown on the bill as an adjustment to the chargeable amount after any transitional relief – i.e. it will appear as a deduction.

## Compensation Arrangements

26. Central government will reimburse billing authorities and those major precepting authorities for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the Supporting Small Businesses relief. Local authorities will be asked to provide an estimate of their likely total cost for providing the relief in a one off estimate for 2017/18. Central government will then provide payments to local authorities for their share of the cost of the estimated relief for 2017/18. The final cost to local authorities will be calculated and reconciled following the NNDR3 for 2017/18.
27. Guidance for local authorities on how to calculate the value of the section 31 grant will be included in the guidance notes for completing the National Non-Domestic Returns (NNDRs). However, in line with the New Burden's principle, section 31 compensation will be calculated having regard to the additional costs on local government of awarding the relief (before any other section 47 reliefs). Therefore, the section 31 grant for Supporting Small Businesses should be calculated by:
  - a. taking the chargeable amount which would have applied for the hereditament after the transitional arrangements and other mandatory reliefs but before discretionary reliefs,

and deducting

- b. the chargeable amount found under the Supporting Small Business scheme before other discretionary reliefs.

28. The same principle will apply for calculation Transitional Protection Payments (TPPs) for the purposes of non-domestic rating income in the rates retention scheme. TPPs on NNDR1s and NNDR3s will be calculating ignoring the Supporting Small Businesses scheme.

# Section 2: Detailed guidance for operation of the Supporting Small Businesses (SSB) scheme

## Day 1 Eligibility for the Scheme

29. For 1 April 2017, the supporting small businesses (SSB) relief scheme applies to hereditaments for which<sup>12</sup>:
- a. the chargeable amount for 31 March 2017 is calculated in accordance with section 43(4B) or (6B),
  - b. in relation to 43(4B) the value of E for 31 March 2017 is greater than 1,
  - c. the chargeable amount for 1 April 2017 is found in accordance with section 43(4), 43(4B), 43(6A) or where regulations 12(3), 12(7) or 12(9) of the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265 applies, and
  - d. the chargeable amount for 1 April 2017 is more than (£600/365) higher than the chargeable amount for 31 March 2017.
30. Where for 31 March 2017 the chargeable amount has been found under section 47, then eligibility for SSB should be determined as if section 47 did not apply.
31. Where the hereditament is shown in a local list for the area of a special authority (i.e. the City of London), then eligibility for SSB should be determined as if the special authority's small business non-domestic rating multiplier was 48.4p for 2016/17 and 46.6p for 2017/18.

## Continued eligibility for the scheme after 1 April 2017

32. After 1 April 2017, the Supporting Small Businesses (SSB) scheme will cease to apply where:
- a. the chargeable amount for a day found under the SSB scheme is the same as or more than the chargeable amount found in the absence of the SSB scheme. This ensures that where, for example, the minimum increase in the chargeable amount in the SSB scheme would take the bill above the level it would otherwise have been then the hereditament will drop out of the SSB scheme. It also ensures that where, for example, with effect from after 1/4/17, the hereditament becomes eligible for 100% Small Business Rate Relief then they also fall out of the SSB scheme,

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<sup>12</sup> unless otherwise stated, references are to the Local Government Finance Act 1988

- b. the chargeable amount for a day would otherwise fall to be found by section 43(5) or where paragraph 12(5) or sub-paragraphs 2(4), 3(4), 4(4), 5(4) of Schedule 2 of the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265 applies (charities or registered community amateur sports clubs), or
- c. the hereditament for a day is unoccupied.

33. Furthermore, where the ratepayer during 2016/17 lost entitlement to small business rate relief because they failed the 2nd property test but have, under the rules for small business rate relief, been given a 12 month period of grace before their relief ended (and therefore was still entitled to small business rate relief on 31 March 2017), then eligibility for the SSB scheme will cease at the end of that 12 months period of grace.

34. Hereditaments which cease to be entitled to Supporting Small Businesses for a day cannot return to eligibility if their circumstances change from a later day. For example, if a property falls unoccupied it will not then be eligible for Supporting Small Businesses relief if it subsequently becomes occupied again.

## Chargeable Amount under the Supporting Small Businesses Scheme

35. Where the Supporting Small Businesses scheme applies then DCLG will fund local authorities to apply a chargeable amount under section 47 of the 1988 Act for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022 found in accordance with the rules in [Part 1 to Part 3 of] the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265 subject to the following changes:

- a. BL for 2017/18 is the chargeable amount for 31 March 2017 x 365 (on the assumption that section 47 did not apply for 31 March 2017 and on the assumption in the City of London that the special authority's small business non-domestic rating multiplier was 48.4p for 2016/17). This ensures the starting base liability for hereditaments eligible for SSB include the SBRR or rural rate relief for 31 March,
- b. Where a certificate has been issued under regulations 17 or 18 then BL for 2017/18 should be found in line with a) above but on the assumption that the rateable value in the rating list was the rateable values as certified,
- c. References to "(BL x AF)" are to "(BL x AF) or (BL + 600) whichever is the greater". This ensures the bill increase is the greater or £600 or the increase under the caps in the transitional relief scheme,
- d. AF is found in accordance with regulation 10(6) irrespective of the rateable value of the hereditament for 1 April 2017. This ensures only the cap on increases for small properties is applied in the SSB scheme irrespective of the actual rateable value of the hereditament,

- e. regulation 12(6)(b) is omitted. This ensures SBRR is not also applied to the capped bill in the SSB scheme. This avoids double counting of relief as illustrated at paragraph 23 above,
  - f. the reference to “2” in regulation 12(8) is “1”. This ensures rural rate relief is not also applied to the capped bill in the SSB scheme. This avoids double counting of relief,
  - g. “U” is taken to have a value of 0 throughout. This ensures that any hereditament whose rateable value is £51,000 or more does not have to pay the 1.3p supplement whilst eligible for SSB relief,
  - h. for a year (the year concerned) other than 2017/18, BL is  $(BL \times AF)$  or  $(BL + 600)$  from the year immediately the year concerned whichever is the greater.
36. No change is made to the meaning of NCA. However, as discussed above, eligibility for Supporting Small Businesses relief ceases when the chargeable amount for a day found under the Supporting Small Businesses scheme is the same as or more than the chargeable amount found outside the scheme.
37. Regulation 6 (special authorities) will apply as normal under the Supporting Small Businesses scheme. This ensures ratepayers in the City of London continue to pay any additional amount attributable to the City multiplier.
38. For the avoidance of doubt, the rules for changes in rateable value with effect from after 1 April 2017 (regulation 13) will continue to apply as normal subject to the amendments in paragraph 35 above. This ensures that, for example, later increases in rateable value are paid in full in the normal way<sup>13</sup>.

## Splits and mergers

39. The SSB scheme will apply to hereditaments:

- a. coming into existence because of the circumstances described in paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 of Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265,
- b. where one of the hereditaments from which the new hereditament was formed in whole or in part was for the day immediately before the creation day eligible for the SSB scheme, and
- c. the circumstances described at paragraph 32 above do not apply for the creation day in respect of the hereditament.

40. After the creation day, the SSB scheme will cease to apply in the circumstances described in paragraph 32 above.

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<sup>13</sup> based on the small business non-domestic multiplier. This is because U is taken to have a value of 0 throughout.

41. The number of hereditaments eligible for SSB which then split or merge is likely to be very small and devising rules in particular for mergers with properties outside of the SSB scheme would be complex. Therefore, in discussions with local authority stakeholders, DCLG has concluded it would be disproportionate to devise detailed rules to prescribe the chargeable amounts in the various circumstances which could arise from a split or a merger.
42. Instead, for hereditaments meeting the criteria in paragraph 39 and 40 above, DCLG will fund local authorities to apply a chargeable amount under section 47 of the 1988 Act found in accordance with the following principle:
- a. that the protection offered by the SSB scheme (that the bill will not rise by the greater of £600 p.a. or the transitional relief caps) will continue to apply in principle to that part of the newly created hereditament which was immediately before the creation day in the SSB scheme, and
  - b. that increases (or reductions) in overall rateable value arising from the split or merger are not subject to the protection of the SSB scheme.
43. For simple splits of hereditaments previously eligible for SSB, authorities may wish to simply apportion the chargeable amount in the SSB scheme for the hereditament before the split in line with the change in rateable value from the split (i.e. in line with the principle in Schedule 2 of Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) (England) Regulations 2016 No. 1265).
44. For mergers and reorganisations, authorities will have to estimate the degree to which, in line with the principle of the SSB scheme, that part of the hereditament which was formerly eligible for SSB should continue to receive support under the SSB scheme. DCLG does not expect authorities to seek any formal apportionments of the rateable value for this purpose.

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